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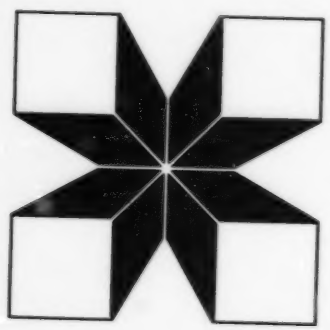

CANADA

EMPOWERING THROUGH COMMUNICATION

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES WITH PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

PILAR RIANO ALCALA

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EMPOWERING THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Women's Experiences with Participatory Communication in Development Processes[1]

Pilar Riano Alcala

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1. INTRODUCTION

Equity, fair representation, and unbiased portrayal of the various groups in society, especially the most disadvantaged ones (for example, poor women), seems to be an accepted principle in most development communication efforts. In the case of women, this principle has been understood as equity of social representation and avoidance of role stereotyping. Although both equity and nonstereotyping are crucial issues in democratizing development communication, women have not been systematically involved in deciding how they want to be represented or in producing development messages. Furthermore, the contribution women can make to communication activities and the communicative functions they carry out in society have tended to be ignored.

The use and manipulation of media by women represent new alternatives to promote democratic access to communicative resources. Participatory communication (PC) refers to the active involvement of community or target groups in manipulating media to produce their own messages and to engage in critical reception. PC activities, beyond being a strategy and method of diffusing information, are means to assist communities in identifying their informational needs, to control systems of communication, and to make informed decisions.

These communicative activities represent new possibilities to meet the learning needs and social struggles of women and their communities. Learning, in this context, includes acquiring skills in problem identification, analysis, visual or dramatic representation, oral or visual communication, decision-making, and negotiation. Learning processes occur in the everyday life of the people and comprise indigenous capacities to learn and to relate to their social and cultural environment (Synopsis of WCEFA Roundtable #20). Control by the community of the content, form, and final presentation of media empowers indigenous systems of learning by integrating oral, performing, and aesthetic traditions into the visual, dramatic, or oral language of the communication means.

Participatory communication has interested development communication theorists, practitioners, and grassroots organizations as a feasible alternative to democratize communication for and about development. Communication, and specifically media, are seen as crucial elements for developing alternatives of participation. Their role is associated with processes of empowering the powerless. Development communication scholars are proposing "participation" as the new communication paradigm encouraging "another development": development based on the premise of the multiplicity that exists in the world (Jacobson 1989; Servaes 1989a, b). Participation and communication are perceived beyond instrumental uses for achieving efficiency or accomplishing project objectives. Participation and communication are means of emancipation and organizing elements in the "collective building of a participative society" (Diaz Bordenave 1989; Lozare 1989).

Practitioners and grassroots organizations see participatory activities as feasible methods of increasing motivation and community control of development and as valuable tools in nonformal education activities. Media (alternative, small-

format media) are seen as a very rich field for developing horizontal processes of communication and strengthening grassroots organizations (Stuart 1987). Donor agencies and national governments are integrating PC techniques as a way of increasing both effectiveness and social and political response to their programs.

The fascination with PC, however, has brought confusion. "Participation" and "communication" are becoming vague, over-used words often used as "rubber stamps" in any circumstance or context. This ambiguous understanding of "participation" has ignored gender and cultural variables that affect communities' perceptions of participation. There are questions about the "preaching" tendency conveyed by most of these programs and the lack of community participation in planning and evaluation of PC programs (Maguire 1987). Also subject to questioning is the appropriate role of researchers, educators, and organizers in participatory activities (Hull 1985).

The 1989 seminar on participatory communication (University of Poona, India), gathered scholars and practitioners to discuss the lack of agreement about what participation is, how to facilitate it, and how decisions on approach and method can come about (White 1989). This seminar evidenced a gap between the enthusiastic institutional and academic approach to PC and its actual implementation.

Women and Participation

The tendency in examining the participation of women in communication is to equate their lack of participation in public communication with their total absence in communicative activities. This misconception originates in a view of women more as an issue/thematic of development than as active, communicative subjects. As a result, research on development communication restricts its analysis to assure women's marginalization and silence from the "public" world. Stamp (1989) questions this issue-oriented perspective based on an artificial dichotomy between a "public" and a "private" sphere. This view restricts women's role to the private realm of home and family. Women are then characterized as passive and silent participants in community issues or problem-solving strategies. Consequently, their participation - or their lack of it - is predominantly seen as a "problem" for development.

Stamp (1989) accurately argues that the problem does not rely on women's silence, but in the privileged status that the community of men has gained in public, dominant communication. While the word of women is absent in the world of male discourse, it is not in their communities' life where they are actively engaged in the physical, social, and cultural reproduction of their families and communities. This active participation of women is particularly strong in communication activities. In fact, as the experiences examined in this report demonstrate, women are never silent or passive to each other, or to their communities. Rather, women play vital communicative functions of information-exchange, transmission of knowledge, and in systems of self-help. To explore and empower women's communicative functions, gender and cultural perspectives must be applied.

The review of participatory communication experiences presented here applies a gender analysis to the evaluation of women's involvement in PC activities. The report looks at PC experiences involving women in different parts of the Third World, and discusses the relationship between communication and education and the effect of gender in PC processes. To introduce these experiences, the report looks at pioneer experiences in using participatory

communication for development purposes. Chapter 2 presents a classification of current applications of PC activities in development. They are classified according to the objectives sought in implementing participatory techniques, and the relation established between a program's strategies and the recipients. To evaluate the potential of PC activities in empowering women, chapter 3 looks at the main characteristics and educative outcomes of participatory experiences with women. This chapter offers a detailed description of the methods, uses and means applied in PC experiences. The last section of the report examines the most common difficulties, constraints and pitfalls faced by participatory programs, offering recommendations for designing and implementing a PC process.

Pioneering Experiences

In the late 1960s, the University of Newfoundland and the National Film Board of Canada carried out a film-making project jointly with the citizen's committee of Fogo Island, Newfoundland (Canada). The fishing community was facing high unemployment and decreasing fish sales. The standard of living had dropped, and education and health services had been reduced. Furthermore, a rumoured government project to resettle the community on the mainland was creating despair.

In the joint project, a series of documentaries about the people of the island was produced with the active input of the community. The films portrayed the traditions of Fogo Island and voiced people's concerns and their sense of frustration. After the films were screened, the community realized that it shared two basic positions: first, their rejection of the government's resettlement program and, second, their willingness to work cooperatively to solve their problems. Screening and discussing the films motivated the people. In Don Snowden's (1982: 22) words:

> Gradually, however, as the films were screened around communities, an increased sense of self-awareness and self- esteem began to emerge. It became apparent too, that there was consensus that Island people had skills, the desire and the capacity to organize themselves for self-help and to provide an effective working partnership with governments in developing a more desirable situation for themselves.

The films were presented to central authorities and politicians in Ottawa, who were moved by the immediacy of a reality of which they were not aware (Williamson 1988).

The "Fogo process" is now recognized worldwide as a pioneering development experience integrating the "audience" as participants in constructing the message (Lewis 1977). The method has been widely applied in regions of India, Africa, and Latin America, and in poor regions of North America. During the 1970s, PC experiences emerged in other parts of the world. Latin American communicators experimented with the use of small-format media (for example, "cassette foro," popular press, cardboard) as alternative means to mass media, and vertical-communication systems that combine an organizative-informative function with an educative one (Kaplun 1984; Peirano 1985).

Programs of popular communication, promoting horizontal systems, peoples' control of media and more democratic means of decision-making, were encouraged. Latin Americans questioned the massive development communication campaigns in the region, criticizing their conception of media as

powerful tools in changing attitudes, promoting literacy, and stimulating urban adaptation (McAnany and Storey 1989). They advocated a "democratization of communications" (Beltran et al. 1976; Diaz 1977), using models of popular communication that promote participation from below and the sharing of relevant social information (Diaz 1989).

In the same years, popular theatre and interactive radio were intensely used in Africa and Asia. Theatre, in Africa, supported the national liberation struggles of African countries and became a tool for extension work. In India, theatre and folk media were used in forms such as the women's conscientization theatre that performed plays on issues of women's oppression (see Kidd 1980; 1982; Communication Research Trends Vol 9, 1988).

Groups of women doing theatre, radio or small-format media formed with the goal of encouraging a more active and effective participation of women in development. These are groups that emerged with the goal of exploring new forms of communication that assist women, their organizative forms and social struggles. Experiences of women using and manipulating media for their own benefit have at this point a significant history in the Third World. However, these groups have started to question the excessive efforts invested in production and funding processes. Entrapped by these activities, they have not developed mechanisms for internal evaluation and for a systematic reflection on the role of women in communication and development. This report aims to contribute at this level by suggesting a characterization of PC processes with women and examining their outcomes and limitations.

2. TYPES OF PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

Participation in development is key to overcoming the social and communication failures of traditional top-down initiatives. In discussing a participatory paradigm, development communicators look at the complex cultural, social, and economic realities of target populations, maintaining that these are the basic elements affecting participatory programs (Hornik 1988; Rogers 1989). Participation, in this view, increases the effectiveness of development messages and the responsiveness of development strategies to local cultural realities (Ascoft and Masilela 1989).

The term participatory communication is used and applied within very different political, cultural, and social contexts with a variety of functions and methods. Experiences reviewed for this report have been implemented according to frameworks such as "community communication," "popular education," "alternative communication," or "conscientizacao." Two common goals are founded in these approaches:

> The conception of participation as a central condition and instrument of transformation in processes of communication for development.
>
> Use of the media for a purpose that goes beyond the diffusion of information to the democratization and facilitation of processes of learning.

Chart 1 is an attempt to illustrate the various types, contexts, functions, and forms in which PC methods and goals are implemented in/for development. It first establishes a distinction between use of PC media as a development tool and PC as a change-oriented participatory medium. The first use of PC comprises communication strategies that have been incorporated into development models, "with the objective of benefitting the under-privileged through community participation in the development process" (Moore 1986: 597). This type of PC can be either program specific and focus on behaviour change, or process oriented and concerned with change, but mainly as public consensus and support.

The second type describes PC strategies that conceive development as a process of social transformation and PC as a vital instrument and condition to bring about change. This approach does not focus exclusively on projects, but seeks generally to promote processes of empowerment as a means of access to communicative resources.

Participatory Communication as a Development Tool

This approach has been used as part of government and international development campaigns, by multilateral agencies, national and international NGOs with three specific types of goals:

(a) Changing current critical practices. Participatory communication techniques can be used in national or regional development projects attempting

CHART 1
USES OF PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION
IN/FOR DEVELOPMENT

MEDIA	CONTEXT	FUNCTION	FORMS
Participatory communication as a development tool	Campaigns Extension work Community development	Changing current critical practices Encouraging audiences' active support Teaching modernizing practices Facilitating Processes of community problem-solving, decision-making and action	Traditional interpersonal communication Intercultural communication Mass mobilization Social marketing Folk communication Indigenous communication systems
Change oriented participatory media	Popular organization Political community action Concientization	Reinforcing existing organizations Promoting participation Denounce, protest Advocacy Encouraging critical skills Learning for change	Popular - alternative communication (communication for social change and organizing) Community media (communication for the democratic exercise)

(Based on Kidd 1982; Moore 1986; Riaño 1990)

to convince the "target population" to change current practices, for example public health campaigns promoting family planning, AIDS education, and public campaigns to reduce drinking and smoking. These communication strategies aim at stimulating public awareness and consensus, and consider audience responsiveness and feedback. Participation, as active awareness, is the element that contributes to maintaining any changes incurred. Public cooperation or willingness to transform current practices and maintain the changes is the participatory input of the intended beneficiaries of the project.

Media function as "loudspeakers" of the expert voice (why a change needs to be introduced), legitimizing the importance of public attention (Hornik 1988) and assisting in reinforcing the project's messages. The maintenance of modified practices is reinforced by using multiple channels of communication (interpersonal, small-format) and local folk media (McLellan 1987).

Communication media, particularly mass media, sensitize, motivate, and disseminate relevant social information. Strategies of social marketing that are attentive to local realities, language, and practices support the communicative approach. Using indigenous channels of communication sustains and reinforces change.

(b) Encouraging the audience's active support. Media are used to encourage the active support of the audiences in national programs, often with international support. The programs are commonly concerned with disseminating development messages in a way that encourages public support for specific programs and extension work (for example, vaccination, water sanitation, agricultural extension, and literacy). Participation, in these projects, describes the public input or voluntary contribution of time and effort to the development program (Protz 1989). Community participation is implemented in the project usually as active cooperation with the program designers (government, planners, administrators, extension workers) (Deshler and Sock 1985), and is generally staged when the program is executed.

Although these programs rely on mass media, it is becoming common to support mass media messages with indigenous communications networks, folk media (puppets, theatre, dance), and small-format media (cardboard, pamphlets, photographs). Incorporating the communication codes of local cultures represents an effort to maximize message understanding and project effectiveness.

(c) Mobilizing the community. PC is used to encourage processes of community problem-solving, decision-making, dissemination and action. PC media act as supporters of a community development strategy that has been planned by an external organism (government, international NGOs, local NGO's) and that follows a established set of goals and actions.

Forms of PC used in this type of communication include mass mobilization of information (advertising, social marketing), intercultural communication, and traditional interpersonal media (folk media). This approach envisions PC as an instrument to further a more community-aware development, attempting to improve the appeal and reach of development programs and campaigns by directing their messages into culturally appropriated language and aesthetics and by increasing feedback (Moore 1986).

Participation in communication interventions of type a, b, and c is meant to maximize the success of a development strategy. The use of certain PC techniques in some stages of implementation responds to a methodological choice of doing "better development." Input from the target audiences occurs

either in the early stages of the program design (as cursory consultation and gaining knowledge about the economic and cultural context of the future participants) or in the final stages of dissemination and implementation (as public cooperation). Eventually, participation of the local people is regarded as a way of making development messages more credible. A strategy of involving local people in broadcasting activities conceives that telling of "successful stories" by community members to other peers is a more reliable and effective strategy of diffusion. In terms of the communication strategy, participation conveys a public feedback or, sometimes, interactive viewing. Participants do not have access to message definition or equipment manipulation.

This approach to PC does not change the linear model of diffusing information or promoting particular messages or products. The scanty interest on the public's perception underlines a conception of participation as an element within the program, rather than an approach for its implementation.

Change-Oriented Participatory Media

Participatory communication may be used to empower populations. It provides the strategies and mechanisms to strengthen groups' communicative networks. In this approach, development communication models must promote a two-way or cyclical communication process based on active community participation. Participation as empowerment implies the participants' control over the participatory process and their involvement in most, if not all, the stages of planning, design, production, and diffusion.

Protz (1989) sees PC as a mediated process of decision-making which involves rural people (the most disadvantaged) directly in discerning and prioritizing their own problems and finding the information and resources needed to solve these problems. PC media that promote social change are used in processes of organization, community advocacy and action, and conscientization. Types of media are materialized in two related forms: popular or alternative communication and community communication. These forms are mainly differentiated for the origin and mode of transmission used. While community media emerge mainly from groups in Western countries advocating citizen participation (Moore 1986), popular or alternative communication developed in Third World countries as part of a strategy of social change and people's conscientization of their subordinated condition. These frameworks are next described.

1. Participatory communication as **popular communication** aims at reinforcing existing processes of organization and to promote and train participants in media promotion. The focus of this approach is in empowering the organization/group in building the critical and creative skills that are within the group (White 1987). Popular communication practitioners argue that communication processes based on an educational approach lead to alternative communication systems. Alternative communication is defined within this framework as,

> part of a socio-political praxis of social transformation; consequently ... these forms of communication are predetermined from outside the communicative field. They are found within the framework of a political project that produces them as instrument and expression of its development (Mata 1983: 34).

Popular communication processes are democratic, and participatory

processes are committed to social organization and mobilization. These approaches question the power position of the "sender" in traditional communication models - as the one controlling the technological expertise and the message to be transmitted. The alternative model consists of a horizontal process of shared messages, circularity of communication, and feedback. Horizontal communication is achieved by the interactive use of media and by involving the people in the production of their own communicative messages. Popular communication comprises independent experiences of education at the grassroots level. The communicative strategy aims at organizing and mobilizing participants in a way so as to create their own expressive channels, manifesting their nonconformity and demands (Moore 1986). The use of small-format media (bulletins, newspapers, cardboard, slides, loudspeakers) and educational radio at the local level (barrios populares, rural areas, and unions) represents the communicative alternative to traditional educative processes and one-way media (Reyes Matta 1981).

2. Participatory communication for political-community action aims at providing means to express the claims and protests of communities and the advocacy of their rights. **Community media** is defined by Lewis (1977) as "communication for the democratic exercise, respecting the rights of the people as subjects and participants in the actions and processes in which communication media are involved." Lewis states that the notion of "community" used in this approach, was originated in the mid-1960s in the industrialized West when capitalist states "could afford to tolerate and contain decentralized initiatives" (Lewis 1977: 235).

Community media is close to the concepts of "group media" and "media for group communication": any means which can foster the process of group interaction through communication based on the life-situation of the group members, and sharing personal experiences that will lead to common endeavours and actions. Community media offer an alternative to media systems and an expansion of the services that mass media cannot offer. Access and participation are the two main tenets of community media production. Access means the ability of the public to approach communication systems in terms of choice and feedback. Participation implies public's involvement in production and management of these communication systems, including decision-making and planning (Lewis 1977; Kennedy 1989).

3. **Critical consciousness** is the use of PC as a means for encouraging critical analysis and skills. The main aim of this type of PC is to promote education for liberation and to create a new cultural consciousness of resistance. Communication practices are characterized in this context as "oppositional" contributors to people's mobilization and creators of a consciousness of individuals' oppressed reality and silence.

Through the dialectic relationship between communicative interaction and critical reflection, concsientizacao approaches attempt to assist individuals and groups in breaking the barriers of their oppressed culture and silence. These processes facilitate the learning of a language that liberates the word and world of the oppressed.

The target group is a basic resource in applying empowerment approaches. They are the instrument of development, rather than passive targets (Lozare 1989). Acknowledging the active role that populations must play in development strays from traditional intervention strategies and makes development a process of access by the people to both resources and decision-making (Goulet 1989). Communication media assist this process, strengthening

populations' negotiation strategies and providing mechanisms of communication across communities (McAnany and Storey 1989).

Use of and reliance on small-format media, indigenous communication systems, and folk media are commonly associated with this type of processes. Mass media are sometimes used to broadcast a program produced by or for the community. According to this view, development programs should strengthen indigenous knowledge, foster survival and development skills, and increase access to resources and decision-making. Participatory communication media involve the group at every stage of this process. The PC experiences with women in different regions of the Third World discussed in this paper apply the basic tenets of the empowerment approach.

3. WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

One characteristic of women of disadvantaged social and economic condition is their lack of access to communication resources. The traditional communication strategies of development programs have overlooked women not only as beneficiaries of development, but also as active actors in communicative processes. Communicative strategies for development have often failed in dealing with issues such as women's underrepresentation, their lack of involvement in mass media, and the numerous problems that women confront in gaining greater access to the benefits of development (United Nations 1982, Baehr and Dyer 1987).

Additionally, women's programs of communication in development have misinterpreted/misread women's communicative situation. The analysis of "women in communication" is built upon an erroneous assessment of women's lack of participation in communication and their marginalization in the private sphere. Earlier in this report, we established the weakness of equating women's absence from the male dominant discourse with their total absence in community life. Last, these strategies have disregarded women's indigenous knowledge and learning systems and their communication capacities (Alfaro 1988; Mlema 1989; Protz 1989).

Poor women, and sometimes middle-class women, face social and cultural constraints that restrain them from public speaking (understood as a male activity) and reinforce the belief that women lack skills to express their opinions in front of men or large groups (Isis International 1986; Mattelart 1986). Even when there is a genuine interest to involve women in participatory processes, their ability to participate is often limited by their heavy family and social tasks. This situation is of special concern for participatory development projects that try to foster horizontal, democratic, and genuine participation.

The application of gender analysis in planning and applying PC projects identifies first, women as subjects - as communicators, consumers, and receptors - and second, the communicative functions of women in their households, communities, or workplace and the social distribution of communicative roles in these environments. Gender analysis looks at the distribution of social communication roles, functions, and cultural traditions (who does what) according to gender, age, and class differences. Particular stress is placed on understanding cultural and social dynamics of the target group, and the power dynamics and resource distribution in society (Young 1988; Rathgeber 1989).

The communicative strategies designed within this framework aim to empower women as communicative agents within their communities, and to encourage women to use their communicative skills in large groups or in the public arena. Considering social functions and the perceived social roles of women by their communities illustrates the distribution of power relations within the community. Failure to consider the presence and complexity of social and power differences inherent in any social group might be detrimental to the

success of the experience (Protz 1989). This review therefore, looks at women as a heterogenous subgroup of larger groups or communities.

This section discusses two sets of questions. First, what is the relationship between communication and education? Can PC activities be used as nonformal educational processes in development programs? Analysis of the relationship between communication and education is influenced by the gender-specific characteristic of the experiences studied in this paper. Second, what are the relationships between gender and communication? How does the gender variable effect communication links and systems among groups of people? To follow these relationships, PC programs' actors, characteristics, outcomes, and limitations are described.

The Participants

Although villagers and poor urban dwellers are the most common target groups, PC programs have also been carried out with workers from unions and the informal sector of the economy. Isolated and marginalized groups (for example, indigenous populations, ethnic minorities) are involved in these processes, women being one of the more active groups. Small-format communication media are frequently used: video, tapes, recorders, slides, loudspeakers, folk media (theatre, dance, songs), and indigenous communication. Mass media such as radio, film, and television have also been used. Although the number of participatory experiences with women might be large, not all are success stories.

The experiences described in this section have as their common characteristic that women are their main participants and producers. An important component of PC experiences is the presence of a certain organizative structure. The initiation of a PC process and the manipulation and use of media by a target group is generally a group effort and strategy to overcome problems of communication, motivation, or diffusion between organizations and community, community and institutions, or leaders and grassroots.

Some of these experiences could be defined as the result of an intervention program[2] carried out for local, national, international NGOs providing strategies and communication resources in a participatory way. In most of the cases there is a combined effort of the NGO, the communication expert (facilitator), and the organization or group in the implementation of a PC process. Facilitators are key actors in these processes. They act as mediators between institutional levels and participants, and between program design and the reality of its implementation. Whereas externally initiated projects present several levels of mediation, projects carried out by local NGOs or grassroots organizations have different dynamics and fewer levels of intervention. Local leaders and activists represent another level or intermediation between the facilitator and the community. They are usually the first to become involved in the project and often receive the technical training.

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[2] As defined by A. Bernard (1990: 10), intervention programs are "those which literally intervene in a community or target group. Originating from outside the immediate control of this group, and delivered through government, NGO, university or donor agencies, intervention most typically takes the form of "projects." These are time-bound (on average 3-5 years) and bring along with them the professional expertise and financial resources necessary to sustain activity for that period, and within the framework of goals and methods similarly set from outside."

This report emphasizes the complex nature of PC processes because of the dynamics created in the interaction of the different actors. Each actor (outsiders, facilitators, groups and participants) has different interests and goals and, therefore, different perceptions of PC experiences. The benefits sought by each actor in participation might be different. Because of the participatory nature of these programs, social, political, and institutional expectations have influence upon their evolution.

Appendix 1 lists the various experiences reviewed for this report offering a classification according to geographic region, means used, conceptual framework, source of initiative, and organizational structure.

Characteristics of Women's Participatory Communication Processes

This section describes communication experiences with women that use PC media production as an emancipatory tool. Common features in using communication means with a participatory perspective are described, along with the characteristics of the means according to their language, relation with the audience, potential, and forms.

Participatory Communication as a Process

Focus on the process rather than on its product defines PC media in an educative and communicative framework in which participants learn through doing. The emphasis is on the process of production as an empowering strategy of women. Gomez (1990: 16) concludes:

> The essence of video process is not its product, but its use: the collective communication practice related with its definition, design, production, exhibition and evaluation, is in itself an experience of collective decision-making and power.

Within this framework of ideas, reports describing women's experiences stress that the final product of a PC process is a by-product (Protz 1989). The product has, nevertheless, an important role within the process as a communicative tool that provokes/invites critical reflection or provides useful and meaningful information to participants, their peers, and communities. Deza (1989), characterizing the various ways in which a particular medium is used, refers to:

> (a) production process (level or degree of peoples' participation/involvement);
> (b) production of message and content (expression of suppressed culture(s), liberating, reflective of people's realities); and
> (c) production use (consciousness-sharing, organization building, linking with support groups).

The potential outcomes of a PC process are provoked by the interactive use of the mean, its direct manipulation, the collective and interpersonal reflection, and their materialization in concrete actions. Deza (1989) concludes that processes of production constitute a "group process of becoming toward a collective message" and engaging in a learning and dialogical production (Calvelo 1989b; Deza 1989; Gomez 1990b).

Participatory Uses of Media

The characteristics presented in this section refer to the common ways of

using media in a participatory framework. These commonalities do not refer to a particular communication means or to its visual or narrative language.

1. Direct involvement of the target group in the communicative process. Most of these experiences conceive that the group of women must have control over the process in terms of decision-making, planning, access to resources, and production process. In theatre, radio, and video, participants decide the content, narrative structure, and creative/artistic treatment. They also engage in dramatic representation, manipulation of equipment, broadcasting, interactive viewing, and promotion.

In Nepal, rural women received training in video production as part of the communication program of a project on credit to rural women. Video was used in community development, to engage women in assessing needs, and in elaborating plans for video production and recording. A strong group of women communicators emerged. Videos produced by women were shown to other women in workshops. Women responded very positively to seeing other women using video. They felt confident and realized that they also could do it. Screening of the videos to the community fostered discussion and negotiation with policymakers and government representatives (see Belbase 1988, 1989; Burket 1989).

2. Demystifying the means of communication. The conventional relation with communication technologies identifies them as inaccessible, expensive, and complex technologies that require professional expertise and male technological abilities. PC experiences with women question this idea, promoting participants' use and manipulation of the technology. Stuart (1990) stresses the critical skills developed in the media-demystifying process. In learning to manipulate a communication means, participants are able to exercise a free self-critical look at the audiovisual work of others, commercial TV included. The process helps participants become critical of the technology instead of accepting it or taking its content for granted.

In theatre, for example, the "star" aura of the theatre crew is demystified. Video or radio training stresses the easy manipulation of the means and the importance of creative skills that do not require literacy skills. Through practice, the group identifies the main characteristics of the means (their visual, auditive, or narrative languages) and finds possible uses of these media for development goals.

The experience of Video SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) in Ahmedabad, India, illustrates this alternative use of communication technologies and its demystifying potential. The association assists its members (home-based workers, vendors, and providers of labour and services) with skills training, social services, cooperative mechanisms, and advocacy of their rights. SEWA received training in video production and formed a cooperative, Video SEWA, to support organization activities of the association. J. Jumani (1988: 3), coordinator of Video SEWA, describes the group and its training:

> The trainees - all women, literate and illiterate - were exposed to video and its technology for the first time.... After the training, the trainers left for their country. The participants began functioning as an informal group which we name Video SEWA. The group began to feel comfortable and confident with video equipment over a period of time and exposure to the machine.

Videos produced by the women of SEWA treat themes such as child

labour, the struggle for better working conditions, and the demands of weaving and block printing. Women screen their productions in many other villages, using the videos to elicit solutions to these problems. The Association travels from village to village producing videos, involving each community in recording the programs. They also use video to influence policy decisions, such as getting licenses for vegetables vendors (see Jumani 1988; Stuart 1987, 1989a,b).

3. Incorporating participatory research methodologies. PC processes conceive that information-gathering and problem-identification are the result of a participatory process as well. The power of the "message" relies in its collective production and validation of information at several levels. First, at the internal level of the group in sessions of discussion, exchange, and brainstorming. Second, at the external level with the community through the active involvement of participants in collecting information, interviewing the community and local authorities, seeking and collecting necessary information, and selecting the appropriate places to shoot, broadcast, or stage a dramatic presentation.

In Tanzania, popular theatre has been used extensively in development programs of women and communication. Theatre training workshops have been carried out on child survival and on improving the socioeconomic conditions of both women and children. In these workshops, the dramatic content is decided after participants identify villagers' perception of problems affecting them. Participants visit villagers in their houses talking to women, men and children. The group discusses the problems detected (e.g., unfair division of labour, marriage problems, lack of water, inadequate social services, low income, and poor communication) and the roots of these problems. The discussion leads to different theatre plays in which participants use traditional women's dances to represent them.

Through the theatre workshop and acting, women of the village of Namionga (southern Tanzania) rediscovered their dramatic potential to represent specific problems and the situation in which these problems emerge. In the open presentations, women became an active audience, discussing the socioeconomic problems represented in the plays and suggesting possible solutions (see Lihambla and Mlama 1986; Mlama 1989).

4. The educative component of PC processes. The means of communication reach beyond purely entertainment or informational purposes, becoming an integral element of educative and organizational processes. The educative element of PC processes assists individuals in identifying membership with a collectivity. For the group involved in training and producing PC media, the process as a whole represents a learning experience. The process generally begins with a training program in which the group identifies problem issues, learns to manipulate the communication means, decides what to say, engages in production (shooting, acting editing, recording, etc.), and presents the final product.

In Bogota, Colombia, mothers from the barrios of the southern part of the city used video to diffuse group experiences in organizing a child care centre. Women workers in a maternity clinic of Bogota produced a video about the strike by which the clinic became the workers' own institution. The process of video production gave them the opportunity to discover their roles in the strike and to reconstruct in the language of video the communicative leadership they played in the strike (see Rodriguez 1989).

5. Participatory processes recover indigenous knowledge, communicative forms, and cultural traditions. The use of participatory

communication media is conceived as active interaction between indigenous and traditional communication forms and the participatory media. Use of video and radio, for example, aims to recover women's oral tradition of story-telling and the richness of popular languages. Theatre experiences aim to recover performing traditions of narrative, music, and folk drama and to recreate festive practices such as carnivals and religious ceremonies and celebrations. The section on outcomes in this report discusses the particular potential that PC media has in enhancing women's communicative skills and their indigenous communicative forms. The dramatic potential of women is described as indigenous communicative form and knowledge that has been recovered through the participation of women in theatre, video dramas, or radio soaps.

In a Nova Scotia fish plant, with an entirely female workforce, use of cartoons and soap operas alleviated a tense climate between union and workers. Through informal communicative means, women suggested how the soap operas should evolve. Bishop (1988: 32) comments,

> "Soap" was, like cartoons, an immediate success. Many of the members of the local were not fluently literate, but Friday at lunch break, when the newsletter was handed out, there was nothing but the sound of crackling paper and eating sounds on the hallway benches and in the cars parked outside, as everyone found out what was happening to the characters this week. Then, during Friday afternoon, women would approach the newsletter committee with their comments: "What did she do that for?" "She should marry the other fellow" .... Even during its short life, though, that little newsletter, with its cartoons and soap opera, proved once again the effectiveness of using people's own culture as a vehicle for their education.

In Nicaragua, the Women's Secretariat of the Nicaraguan Association of Rural Workers organized workshops ("get-togethers") to assist women in communicating their difficult working conditions to the general assemblies on work norms. The workshops used "photostories" as educative means. The combination of a visual and dramatic language was seen as particularly suited to the workshop's participants who could not read easily. The language of these photostories was carefully reviewed by the women workers themselves and adapted to vernacular uses of the language. The photostories were collectively read and analyzed in the workshop sessions, producing a very enthusiastic response. Workshops facilitated a more firm integration of women in the discussion of work norms (see ICAE 1989).

6. Interactive relations with the audience. Participatory uses of media conceive the stage of reception as an active communicative moment of interaction between image and viewer, play and audience, producers and receptors. Audiences' participation, their perception and the meaning they make of messages that have been disseminated by others "like them" constitute a key moment in problem sensitization and a new process of communication production.

"Club Mencia" is a women's radio program in the southern region of Dominican Republic. Women of the region participate in the program structured as a listener's club, which they join by sending their name, address, and other information. Audience participation is the most important element within the program which uses forms such as on-air discussions and letters. The producers invented a "pirate" station Radio Macho ("the radio station for men who wear the pants") to introduce the problem of "machismo" with a combination of humour and critical reflection. Radio Macho interruptions of women's broadcasting are

later discussed on the air (see O'Connor 1989; Mata 1989).

7. PC media processes acknowledge the entertainment value of media production and reception. As much as PC processes release the creative and critical skills of participants, they provide an experience of entertainment and humour release. Gomez (1989a: 5) reports the release of laughter and the development of critical awareness that screening generated among participants in a video workshop in Nicaragua:

> On many occasion we screened several times the preparations or results of a particular activity with the groups. The first screening invariably produced a constant roar of laughter, which eventually calmed down on the second or third ones. As the groups saw and heard themselves on the screen, they could not only remember in detail what they had said or done just before, but they could also take distance and observe themselves in a more aware and critical manner.

Acknowledging the entertainment component of this process helps to understand the individual and group's motivations to participate beyond rationalistic explanations of "consciousness" development and learning.

Participatory Communication Means

Although the means alone does not produce effects/change, the characteristics of its language might reinforce particular skills, interactions, or associations. Successful application or implementation of a PC experience is the result of the adequate and balanced combination of participatory group dynamics (in planning, resource administration, and evaluation), effective communication strategies sensitive to the local culture and to their needs, appropriate selection of the communication means, adequate conditions for implementation, group commitment, and flexible methodologies. This section describes the three communication means that are more widely used in PC experiences with women: theatre, radio, and video. Chart II provides a comparison of these means according to their language, characteristics of reception, forms of implementation, and potential (medium's strengths in promoting PC processes).

According to the visual and narrative language that characterizes each means of participatory communication, specific communicative processes and outcomes might be reinforced. Use of print materials with women, for example, might enhance their analytical thinking and foster literacy skills; theatre might reinforce emotive responses and develop the special dramatic abilities and creative skills of women. The selection of a particular means requires a careful assessment by groups and facilitators, in terms of:

> the traditional media and communicative practices in the community and their role in the community;
>
> the type of relation/contact they plan to establish/encourage with the audience (feedback, active response, participation in the production process, critical awareness);
>
> the specific process the group is attempting to further (organizational, educational, information, conflict-management, etc.); and
>
> the social, educational, gender, and generational composition of the group.

CHART 2
MEANS OF COMMUNICATION IN/FOR DEVELOPMENT

MEANS	LANGUAGE	RECEPTION	POTENTIAL	FORMS
RADIO	Sounds Tone	Can be listened individually or in groups Reaches far distances: open microphone Open to imagination Allows distracted reception	Suits oral forms of transmission Acts as an extension of musical cultures Adapts to reception patterns of rural communities Provides social informative services Allows flexible use and easy acquisition	Educational radio Radio schools Training-literacy Service radio Cultural preservation Radio soaps Religious broadcasting Loudspeakers Radio cassette forum

MEANS	LANGUAGE	RECEPTION	POTENTIAL	FORMS
THEATRE	Dramatic Tridimensional Movement	Prompts physical and emotional involvement Encourages direct acting responses from the public Collective reception Requires scenic space	Recuperates performative traditions of dance, singing, mime, patron-saint festivals and carnivals, street theater, folk drama and puppets Uses cultural symbols and themes widely understood Suits women's dramatic potential	Teaching tool Folk drama Drama workshops Literacy work Street theatre Popular theatre Peasants' theatre Cultural preservation

MEANS	LANGUAGE	RECEPTION	POTENTIAL	FORMS
VIDEO	Audio visual Framing Movement Angle	Adaptable to viewers' needs: can be repeated and paused Instant feedback Can take a narrow audience approach	Provides alternative to TV technology Low production costs Immediacy and flexibility Easy to operate Visual clarity and impact Accessibility Ripple effect Uses local languages	Video documentaries Video dramas Broadcast videos Street video Group video Policy change Education and training Cultural preservation Public relations

Several possibilities exist in using audiovisual, dramatized, printed, or small-format media. Radio, theatre, and video are particularly defended by their users. The language of these means seems to suit the goals of PC processes and adapts to the cultural particularities of the participant communities. Throughout the years, PC experiences have favoured the use of a specific means. The last and apparently more generalized fashion is video. Video is at the moment recalling the interest of almost every institutional and organizational level in development programs and processes. In many distant parts of the Third World, video is becoming a means with a widespread use for community and development purposes as it is largely used by community media groups in Western countries.

Since the 1960s, radio is the mass medium more intensely used for educational and developmental purposes. Radio's potential to suit rural audiences and to adapt easily to oral forms of transmission have made it a "popular" means. Radio is used in a variety of forms: radio schools, non-commercial popular radio, popular programs in commercial radio stations, and new uses of radial means such as peasant/clandestine radio stations, loudspeakers, and cassette-forum.

Use of radio in/for development fosters interactive communication and social diffusion. For its users, radio represents an open microphone that reaches far distances, providing social services among communities, families, and organizations while circulating relevant information and ideas. This far-reaching potential of radio and its significant use by indigenous and rural populations mark the potential effectiveness of radio for development purposes. Today, radio is used by governments, agencies, NGOs, and grassroots organizations as an important educative agent.[3]

Among the performing arts, theatre has been the most intensely used for/in development. The capacity of theatre to involve audiences (dramatically, physically, and emotionally) is a powerful tool in encouraging critical skills and action. Theatre is used as a tool to diffuse developmental messages (e.g., campaigns of health and nutrition, water and sanitation, farming practices, etc.) and for local extension work.

Popular theatre is a modality of theatre in development encouraging people's involvement in problem-identification, dramatization of conflicts, discussion, and action. It is a process-oriented creation that attempts to put across a specific development message to stimulate processes of community action.

The special potential of theatre relies in its continuity with oral and performative traditions and its combination of festival, leisure, celebration, and dreaming that make drama a powerful communicative and experiential mean of communication. Theatre, it is argued, incorporates and understands the cultural process which leads up to a desire to celebrate, criticize, and reflect. Performance, furthermore, acts upon the cultural history of the community while

[3] For a review and critical analysis of experiences of interactive and participatory radio, see Kaplun 1984; Lewis 1984; Burke 1987; Karunanayake 1987; Alfaro 1988; Hein 1989; Mata 1989; O'Connor 1989; Tealdo, A. 1989.

opening the audience's emotional and analytical senses.[4]

Use of video in interactive and participatory ways reaches, according to its promoters, the characteristics of a revolution. Recently an editorial article of Media Development (1989, 1) stated that the potential of video is almost limitless,

> There is not indeed other medium like video which offers ordinary people so much choice and therefore freedom, so much creativity and therefore self-assertion and growth, and so much collective knowledge and experience and therefore learning.

Video's main difference from television is that it allows nonprofessional and ordinary people control over the creation and distribution of programming. Use of video fosters decentralization and low production costs. Because of the immediacy (instant playback) and flexibility (can be stopped, edited, paused) of video, it is particularly adaptable to small and large audiences. Video adapts to oral ways of transmission and is particularly powerful because of the combination of image, movement, tones, and angles that it allows.

Experimental users of video report large lists of participatory uses for counter information, policy change, education, public relations, documentaries, and drama.[5]

Kennedy (1982) notes the tendency in evaluating PC processes to focus on the media themselves instead of the context in which they were used. Theatre, video or radio do not have independent power to create organization or produce change. They, Kennedy (1982: 39) argues, "can only enhance and strengthen a process that already exists."

Outcomes of the Experiences

In all the experiences described in this report, participation in media production became, for every woman, the means of acknowledging her hidden communication skills. Once they demystified the technology and language of the communication means, women became aware of their potential as communicators. In learning to produce video, theatre or radio, they gained access to communication resources and processes of decision-making and negotiation, affirming their accumulated knowledge and experiences. The communicative experience created an individual and group process of self-learning, that was related to women's way of being, speaking, acting, and learning (Alfaro 1988).

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[4] Literature on theatre is extensive, but there are excellent reviews of theatre for/in development. For a complete state-of-the-art review of popular and development theatre see Kidd and Coletta 1980; Kidd 1982; Communication Research Trends on "Popular Theatre" 1988. For reports and analysis of national and local experiences, see Ford-Smith 1980, 1989; Lihamba and Mlama 1986; Mlama 1989.

[5] A first critical attempt at looking at video as a development tool is found in Protz 1989. For reviews on particular experiences of interactive uses of video see Snowden 1982; McLellan 1987; Stuart 1987, 1989a,b; Belbase 1988, 1989; Jumani 1988; Burket 1989; Calvelo 1989a,b; Gutierrez 1989; Hayward 1989; Ogan 1989; Rodriguez 1989; Turner 1989; Gomez 1990a; Roncagliolo 1990; Tomaselli 1990. Attempts to outline a theoretical framework and model of video production are found in Nair and White 1987, 1988, 1989; White and Patel 1988; and Gomez 1990b.

In the "pueblos jovenes" of Lima, Peru, many vegetable and fruit vendors concentrate in public markets. They are members of the association of public markets, Pamplona Alta. Most of the market vendors are women; nevertheless, until 1985, the association's governing board consisted almost entirely of men. A member of the board concerned with the weak interaction and diffusion of communication among association members invited women of the market to use the loudspeakers.

A group of women, assisted by a local institution of communication, decided to use the market's loudspeakers to communicate problems, such as tax payments, selling permits, and legalization of land. Through radiosoaps, created and narrated entirely by the women, the personal experiences of the group members and of other women from the barrios were recreated. The stories in these radio soaps narrated the incidents faced in their migration to the cities, the daily struggle of women to live in the cities, their work as domestic servants, the invasion of urban land by impoverished families, the barrio's lack of urban facilities, and the association's internal conflicts. Access to loudspeakers, and later to a weekly radio program, was crucial in creating a new dynamism in the market's association.

The popular weekly programs began reaching many other barrios of Lima. Women became vehicles of community communication and disseminators of socially relevant information. Their programs provided community services (social and local news) and support to organizational activities. Women assumed a leadership role in their communities and thus, in 1985, the elected governing board of the association consisted entirely of women. Weekly radiosoaps were broadcast through two local radio stations. Today, the women are producing video dramas and training other poor women and men in radio and video techniques (see Alfaro 1988, 1989).

The experience of the women's group in Lima reveals the potential of PC processes in appealing to the subject's emotional level and to subjective processes. These processes occur at the level of identities and social relations and are effective means of promoting self-reliance. Because PC deals with subject's social and material reality, it also stimulates critical skills and provokes analytical processes. As a result, the communicative experience links educative and organizational process with the subject's social and cultural identity (Riano 1985; Alfaro 1988).

Two levels of educative impact are distinguished in evaluating educative and communicative outcomes in the experiences related: the level of the group, or organization, engaged in media production and the level of the community or group that represents the active audience or public. The community joins in discussions about the issue presented, course of action, negotiation, or training possibilities. At the level of the community, the product is used as a means of raising consciousness, support, motivation, and active involvement in development initiatives.

After reviewing several experiences in PC, the following educative, organizational and communicative outcomes have been identified:

1. Participatory communication media enhance dramatic and visual skills that assist individuals and groups in expressing their needs, interests, and perceptions of reality. In India, the experience of the Centre for Development of Instructional Technology (CENDIT) shows that manipulation of media by the people develops special skills in identifying what they want to say and how they want to represent it visually (problem-identification). Process

skills also develop, but not as a simple, direct outcome of becoming "media producers." Access to the means of production furthers the skills necessary to express visually or dramatically the interest, concerns, and reality of the participants. Factors such as the presence of a strong organization and the nonauthoritarian role of the facilitators also create conditions for success. For these outcomes to materialize, systems of hierarchy and power (who is who in the community), socially perceived roles of women (who does what), traditional processes of decision-making, and community communication systems must be identified by the group/facilitators, and adequately considered in the production process. McLellan concludes (1987) that media manipulated by the people encourage a self-confidence and creativity that lead to group awareness. In the validation of this process, the group/community strengthens its capacity to make informed decisions (what and when to make a change).

2. Participation in communication processes brings higher message receptivity and effectiveness in sharing information. Nair and White (1987, 1988), testing a model of participative message development in the village of Sonori, India, and in Washington County, New York, emphasize this point. Proposing video as an effective way of disseminating information at the grassroots level, they describe the potential of participatory media as an instrument of change. The participation of the receiver in message development cultivates perception and enhances the individual's capacity to analyze and evaluate what she or he is dealing with. Video is seen as particularly suited in this aspect. Video's immediacy and flexibility allow the active involvement of the audience. By "seeing themselves," or because of the immediacy of "seeing others like them," video acquires more credibility, and subjects develop the ability to look at themselves and others critically. Video provides people with a tool to present their community as they see it, without mediators or interpreters (Kennedy 1982; Rodriguez 1989; Protz 1989; Stuart 1989b).

The "Village Video Network" supports video groups in different parts of the Third World and promotes video exchange and the creation of new groups. An important goal of the network is to encourage lateral communication among NGOs and grassroots organizations. It shows videotapes produced by grassroots organizations to other groups of women, listening to their responses. This process has proved very stimulating (ripple effect) in encouraging participation and formation of new groups of video producers.

3. Using participatory communication media brings self-reliance and confidence to the participants. The experience of "doing for themselves" and "seeing themselves" in video created in SEWA a collective sense of confidence. The Nepali group of women, producing "videoletters" on forestation and health, discovered the possibilities of producing self-instructional videos without literacy skills. These women, with a very low level of education, recognized their potential to produce a collective message. The positive response that women's radio soaps had in Lima affirmed their roles as communicative agents and as new leaders of the association. The "senders" were not separated from their "receptors" because they shared the same universe of identity, problems, and experiences. Video production for the women of Bogota's barrios was an empowering process that furthered their ways of expression and tastes. For these women, the camera became, "a tool to look at their world, their everyday life and themselves. It became an instrument for building an identity" (Rodriguez 1989: 15). J. Jomani (coordinator Video SEWA) brings forward this point in her conclusion of SEWA experience in India (Jomani 1988: 17).

> The use of video has started the process of exposing ordinary people to modern, sophisticated technology. Urban and rural poor women, like to

watch tapes, identify with them, and find them useful. Direct, horizontal communication between people becomes possible only when technology is demystified, taught and given in the hands of the people. They create their own information and use according to their needs. All they need is an opportunity!

The strength of PC processes in demystifying technology is particularly strong for women because technology operation is identified as a male domain. By manipulating the technology, women realize how simple the technology is and feel reaffirmed in their work, knowledge, and effort (Protz 1989). Once, the technology is demystified, women's "shyness" in the production process disappears. Women then are able to explore their full communicative potential and creativity. Alfaro (1988) explains how the group of women producing radiosoaps evolved from a functionalistic and inhibited use of language to a polychromatic use of voices (tones and effects), improvisation, and total expressiveness. Further, the stereotyped idea of women's lack of confidence to express their ideas in front of men and their silence disappear. "It is in the process of learning to use a communication mean and in the action of being communicating, that shame disappears and trust emerges" (Alfaro 1988: 28).

4. Participatory communication methods recognize women's communicative roles. Calandria (Peruvian association of social communicators) promoted workshops in videodrama for the barrios of Lima. During the training process, they perceived different ways of experiencing learning, dramatization, and production according to the gender of the participants. Facilitators also perceived gender differences in relation to dramatic skills. Men felt uncomfortable in dramatizing specific situations. Women tended to become totally involved in dramatic representations and perceive themselves as owners of the story (Calandria 1989). The relationship that men and women have with communication explains these differences. The communication of men tends to be dominated by the dynamics of rational public speaking and formal interpersonal communication. Women are engaged in community networks that promote emotive, familiar forms of communication. Acting for them is a real experience that is spoken and felt. This emotional and familiar element characterizes women's relation to the communicative act.

Through story building for radiosoaps, videodramas, or theatre plays, women of Africa and Latin America have identified the dramatic potential of their personal experiences of migration, colonization, gender, marriage, work, etc. Alfaro (1988) further states that, in this process of story building, women acknowledge and affirm the social role they play in their communities (barrio, village, association) recognizing themselves as women and as mothers, "but not just as family mothers but social mothers: a social maternity connecting women, organization and community." Alfaro identifies women's individual and collective participation and identity-building as a social maternity.

5. Participation in media production gives a deeper understanding of the reality represented. Deza (1989) affirms the dialogical nature of participatory processes in his description of soundslides production by a group of Philippine fishermen. To communicate effectively, the individual or group needs to internalize the message they want to convey. Through dialogue, individuals validate data and establish the message they want to convey, achieving a deeper understanding of the reality. Dialogue and collective production reinforce individual's perceptions and enhance a "process of becoming" toward a collective message (Deza 1989). The process of production enhances and develops life and critical skills that allow individuals and groups to participate in problem identification, data collection, analysis, and evaluation.

Sistren is the Jamaican women's theatre and cultural organization. This group started as an educational and recreational activity for the women employed in a government training program for teachers' aids. It has grown to have a permanent, independent theatre group that creates and acts its own plays. Sistren also offers educational services on issues of gender and participates in campaigns and actions for the change in the situation of women. Sistren trains women in drama representation emphasizing the value that new forms of communication have in making visible women's struggle and creativity. After more than ten years of performing work in which the group has had national and international impact, its members perceived that the major achievement of the organization is, "not in its impact on the position of women in Jamaican society as a whole, but rather in what the organization has been able to provide for its members" (see Ford-Smith 1980, 1990).

6. Participatory communication methods reinforce existing indigenous life skills. Protz (1989) studied participatory video production in India. She observed that the indigenous knowledge and skills people use in their daily survival should be reinforced by PC experiences. These skills comprise indigenous systems of seeking and sharing information (e.g., gossiping as a system of counter-information and complicity between "sender" and "receptor"), popular wisdom on conflict management and resolution, popular ability to deal with uncertainty, etc. For Protz, only a participatory approach based on the recovery of indigenous knowledge can discover the hidden communicative potential of women and knowledge that usually is overlooked by development initiatives. Reports on PC experiences with women stress the discovering, in the process, of women's communication talents and capabilities.

The participants of the Jamaican women's theatre group, Sistren, were able to discover their full dramatic potential during the initial training workshops. These women discovered the rich cultural and performative tradition they possessed, but had not yet spoken about openly. Ford-Smith (1980) explains how the Sistren training program encouraged women to connect to this legacy of practical art, concluding that "women like Sistren had delivered a cultural tradition which they now had to make use of."

7. Participatory processes reinforce group membership. African experiences with theatre and Latin American experiences with videodrama and radio soaps suggest that story-telling or dramatization recognize "owned," individual stories and an individual's membership in a community. The educative outcome, the reinforced collective identity, is explained by a communicative process that reaches family, social, and cultural realities.

Participation is empowerment when the group or community recognizes itself as collective subject and as actors in the processes of learning and change. Participation in communication activities empowers individuals as subjects of a learning process that provides useful information, enhances analytical and creative skills, and encourages processes of group self-identity and self-reliance. In this way, participatory communication activities increase the group sense of efficacy in its ability to relate to social and political realities, to decide about strategies of communication with others (communities, authorities, policymakers, planners), and to lead organizational activities.

The use of media in a participatory fashion satisfies basic learning needs (literacy, and analytical and survival skills) that individuals and groups require in their struggle to reach acceptable levels of life, and to develop their intellectual and creative skills. In the case of women, participatory uses of media

can promote a more equal distribution of communicative and social resources and further support women's struggles. The process is characterized as one of learning. Bernard (1990: 4) characterizes learning as a process involving,

> the acquisition of information and of intellectual and mechanical skills and the expression of new attitudes.... Much more central in the learning process is the increasing ability to predict consequences, weigh alternatives, perceive comparative advantages and distinguish salient characteristics of a situation. It involves the individual's enhanced awareness of self and community as active agents with both the capacity and the right to influence life conditions.

Indeed, the experiences described in this report generate a process of learning in the terms defined by Bernard. If participation in media production energizes a learning process, its collective feature is the empowering energy of these women. It is upon the interaction of these three elements, participation, empowerment, and learning that the role of PC processes focuses.

The concept of community "selfhood" appears useful to synthesize educative and communicative outcomes of the experiences related. According to Fuglesang and Chandler (1986: 2), selfhood means,

> more than cultural identity, it is cultural self-confidence. It is the authentication of a group's or community's selfhood that releases the energy for participation.

Participation is both a condition to promote genuine processes of emancipation and its product. As a qualitative outcome, participation comprises the development of an individual's sense of belonging and ownership to a group/community. According to this view of participation, the development process must respect the cultural autonomy of each group/community to make decisions and should be structured on the principle of social accountability (internal and external). Fuglesang and Chandler (1986) reviewed 200 participatory communication experiences finding that the most successful were process-oriented initiatives that based their engagement on the respect for the community's ideas and attitudes while the community was encouraged to be part of the process of production.

Moore (1986) and Protz (1989) suggest some of the conditions required in implementing a genuine participatory process of media production. Protz stresses the importance in dealing with the several social barriers to use of a specific media language. Understanding of the community as a complex organization of class, caste, gender, and competing interests is a central view required in PC programs. The adequate identification of local needs and of the influential institutions at the local level helps to establish PC processes on a practical basis. The emphasis on the process rather than on its product instructs on the significance of conceiving the use of communication means as part of a more general process of emancipation and change. Dialogue and cooperation, respect and social accountability are the guiding principles regulating real democracy in PC processes. Last, the tactful balance of methodological and production goals with a strategic one guarantees avoidance of instrumentalist and manipulative experiences.

Women are a valuable resource in PC experiences. From the review of PC programs with women, the potential of women to become effective communication agents at the public level is evident. Their natural communication skills, acute perception, and emotive involvement are resources

that, if appropriately considered, release the communicative potential of women. This review of PC experiences with women, however, shows that there is not an unique way to encourage genuine participation as there is not a success formula. Within a group process and in an adequate context, PC media promise women groups a very rich ground to develop their communicative potential and support their process of organization and change.

4. A CRITICAL INQUIRY INTO PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

Actors involved

Independent of the gender variable, actors involved in a participatory process are defined by the characteristics of the project being implemented. Hornik (1988) identified different interests and benefits that participation represents for each actor and institution involved. Failures and successes in participatory projects affect each of them differently.

Choosing a participatory approach in communication for development involves managerial, methodological, fiscal, and temporal implications. However, other social and cultural determinants are also involved in participatory activities. Programs aimed at women face particular constraints in terms of social acceptance and power distribution. The problems and risks discussed here are not limited to projects with women. At a general level, problems include those faced by any type of program involving participatory strategies.

Although development communicators see participation as key in rethinking the "communication in development" paradigm, practitioners struggle with the operation of its implementation. An operational gap seems to exist between progressive thinking on horizontal, democratic participatory processes and the current practice of communication in development projects.

Mediators or negotiators?

Practitioners or facilitators, of PC programs face the hardest part of the process. They are neither the designers nor the beneficiaries, but are those responsible for the success of the project. Facilitators give the final orientation to the project and face the everyday obstacles. As mediators among project initiators, communication researchers, and the community or intended beneficiaries, they deal with many different ideas and interests.

The teaching and use of media with a participatory methodology questions the traditional roles of sender-receptor in communication media. The instructor is seen as the facilitator accompanying a group's process of learning. Abandoning a power position, the development communicator becomes one more actor and participant in the learning and media-production experience. To reach this relationship is hard, because of the traditional view of the educator as the one possessing the knowledge. Furthermore, the facilitator loses a power position that also brings privileges. In a PC program, the facilitator focuses on empowering the group to exercise its power to decide and act on its own behalf. Kennedy (1982, 1989) characterizes this role as one of animator of processes of change.

Facilitators require definite skills and personal characteristics to effectively assume their role. Among others, abilities in establishing rapport and empathy with the community, in understanding local customs, cultural practices, taboos, social communication functions, and hierarchies and informal power in

traditional organizations (Protz 1989). To discover natural leaders and hierarchical roles and, so, to avoid common failures of PC experiences, facilitators require sensitive observation skills. Not having such skills can contribute to encouraging community factionalism, reinforcing local authoritarian figures, or creating new elites. The potential of communication media to empower subjects can be misled by selected, elitist minorities, who use it to reinforce their power positions (for example, by controlling access to the equipment, issues to be dealt with, reception). Participatory experiences with video repeatedly report this difficulty (Jurmo 1980; Pigozzi 1982; White and Patel 1988; Protz 1989).

The role of the facilitator as a promoter of participation seems quite paradoxical (IDRC 1988). Their privileged position at the beginning of the project must evolve to an equal position; nevertheless, facilitators are in charge or must guarantee continuity. How does the facilitator face, for example, the paradox of assuming leadership roles when the participation (assistance) of the community is declining? Should the facilitator be an active participant without attempting to intervene or influence? No doubt, intervention requires very careful and wise decisions. This issue is illustrated by the dilemma of control that facilitators in a women's theatre workshop faced in Tanzania (Mlama 1989: 45):

> It was difficult for the animators to steer the women away from the Mandelela dance and to introduce other artistic expressions like drama, mime, etc., to widen the horizon of the performance. Because the women were accomplished artists of their Mandelela dance, they took control of its performance. As such, the group could not bring out more clearly and in greater depth the issues raised about the unfair division of labour and marriage problems. In the end the animators had to settle down for only what was communicated through the three songs and the story.

Once facilitators overcome manipulative or authoritarian roles, they might consider whether dependent relations have been created. Horizontal approaches and equal partnership might reinforce dependency. The role of facilitators can be easily identified as a missionary role, working as an equal in the community, but building a silent dependency. When the facilitator leaves the community, the continuity of the experience is at risk. This point is very difficult to evaluate because of the lack of follow-up in PC experiences.

Beneficiaries?

Not much is known about beneficiaries' evaluation of participatory experiences. One of the serious drawbacks of participatory approaches is the assumptions about the target group's desire to participate. If participation is understood as community access to decision-making, one needs to recognize community autonomy to decide their active participation (Fuglesang and Chandler 1986) and furthermore, to assume the responsibility of evaluating and deciding the success or failure of a program.

The question has already been posed: who benefits from participation? Failure to account for class structures, ethnicity, patterns of organization, and age and gender differences might mean unequal distribution of benefits, violation of traditional practices and creation of conflict (Jurmo 1989; Pigozzi 1982; McKee 1988). Jurmo (1980) reported obstacles encountered in implementing a program of functional literacy. Among managerial, planning, funding, and political problems, the promotion of young rural teachers violated the traditional system of decision-making by the elders that has always been respected.

La Belle (1987) reports that experiences with popular education in Latin America tend to be weak in fostering social action, improving socioeconomic conditions, and stimulating political change. Beneficiaries might be left with a sense of frustration, even though they acknowledge nontangible, qualitative outcomes obtained from participatory projects (namely, sense of identity, self-reliance, etc.).

The feeling of being manipulated is another limitation to people's participation. Often, subjects participating in these projects do not have a clear picture of the various institutional levels involved. Very often, for example, they are unaware of the existence of donor agencies and professionals experts. Fieldworkers and facilitators do not always know how to deal with this issue. When the group becomes aware of the outside intervention, negative reaction is frequently reported.

Limitations and Constraints

Although PC activities look very promising in supporting development initiatives, there are many external and internal constraints and risks. Neither participation nor communication can be seen as recipes for an inherently "good" approach in development.

Most of the literature and reports on PC experiences are written with a triumphalist tone. The inspiring reports about successful PC experiences have usually overlooked the risks and difficulties faced. This view has contributed to create an excessive euphoria on participatory communication that has turned very fashionable. Discovering its fashionability, the term faces its co-optation; "participatory communication" sells to donor agencies, international and local NGOs, and governments. The real benefits of PC as a strategy promoting peoples' control of development can be missed because "participation" is becoming a bureaucratic routine. Difficulties, limitations, and pitfalls of these processes are hardly discussed.

Practitioners tend to avoid the reporting of difficulties experienced. The tendency of external agencies to associate success with tangible outcomes and to emphasize a "project coherence" (between goals and action) has provoked a "fear" at informing with realism. Development communication theorists tend to avoid the questioning of PC because their priority is on "conceptualizing" and "creating" models of what PC means. The discussion of problems in participation has been restricted to external and institutional levels (donors, experts). It has been carried out in terms of "efficiency," and therefore, the problems for discussion are replicability, practicability, and cost-effectiveness. Outside the institutional and bureaucratic level, these issues are not of concern for the beneficiaries.

A few publications have started to address the problems of PC from the point of view of the participants. Moore (1986) indicates that pitfalls and constraints in PC are of external and internal nature. External constraints emerge from "anti-participatory formalized dominant structures" and internal constraints emerge from "inherent contradictions within the participatory process itself" (Moore 1986: 614).

External Constraints

Jurmo (1980) and Arnst (1989) note the difficulties of obtaining a real interest and commitment from government bureaucracies (used to vertical and

authoritarian styles) to encourage participatory programs. Feachem (1980) suggests that attempts of integrating participatory programs at this level could be rather costly because of the complexity of functions and personnel required.

An active commitment of the "participants" to carry out programs of media production or community development is feared from bureaucracies because of the threat to their decision-making power. Tensions between state and organizations become a common problem faced by groups working on PC. For example, the use of PC media as "mediator" or "interlocutor" with government or bureaucratic structures might escalate existing conflicts or make the community a target of censorship. In democratic systems, access to media is a respected citizen right, but in non-democratic societies this type of communication is an easy target of repression.

The excessive verbal enthusiasm of governments and development agencies does not necessarily coincide with their attitudes about problems and risks of the implementation. Political and administrative realities such as distrust in a community's managerial capacity, the fear of losing control, the lack of available funds, and the reduced staff are common to these programs (Feachem 1980). Arnst (1989) describing an attempt to implement participatory video programs in Thailand, notices that although government and the funding agency were supportive of the participatory program, they were reluctant to let people use and keep the equipment. The gap between words and deeds seems to be one of the major constraints of participatory programs that are externally initiated.

Donor agencies, development communicators, planners, and policymakers fear the small impact of participatory experiences. Relying on cost-effectiveness criteria, they criticize PC projects' limited impact, the difficulties of replication, the long duration of the intervention process, and the absence of evaluation criteria. Feachem (1980) asks in this context whether participation is not just a complex and irrelevant surrogate of government structures. McKee (1988) interviewed social marketers on their perceptions of participatory communication strategies. Social marketers are very critical of participatory approaches because of the minuscule scale of programs and the large investment of time and human resources required to produce results. PC programs are criticized as "too slow" and therefore impossible to be applied widely. Participation is seen as a "nebulous" and non-effective idea that defies development's planning and time-frames.

From the point of view of the practitioners and local institutions, the implementation of PC processes is affected by those external constraints mentioned above. The dependency on external funding is another constraint that will be extensively discussed later in this section.

Internal Constraints

Organizational problems, lack of resources and time, and patriarchal style of decision-making are some of the internal constraints that affect local NGOs and grassroots organizations. In a process of media production, these difficulties can seriously affect its evolution. The establishment of priorities constitutes an internal challenge. The social and political pressures and the volunteer character of the participation make the establishment of priorities difficult. Often, there is a confusion or lack of consensus on what are the main priorities and the reasons to engage in a new activity.

Moore (1986: 615) further suggests the following internal constraints:

(a) the lack of trained personal and other resources;
(b) the burden participation plays on the initiatives of the poorest, who have neither the time or the necessary resources;
(c) the political vulnerability of popular movements.

Risks and Pitfalls

Risks and pitfalls in participation emerge from the conflictive essence of these processes, their conditions of implementation (external funding), and their framework of participatory ideas.

Dependency on International Funding

Economic dependency. International funding of projects or programs to local NGOs or grassroots organizations provides a reliable way to obtain the time, resources, and group independence that local conditions (economic and social resources, political coercion, etc.) would otherwise never allow. Donors and "recipients" of funding agree on the goal of striving for economic self-sufficiency. Group and local NGO's efforts in reaching economic self-sufficiency can be jeopardized, however, because of the time and energy the evolution of their participatory programs takes.

None of the experiences and programs reviewed has reached economic self-sufficiency; they still rely on external funding. They face, therefore, the consequences of such a relationship: following of funding policies in terms of organization of activities and goals by project, accountability to an external organization, deadlines and time frames.

In particular, PC programs in media production do not offer many possibilities of generating income. Occasionally, participants have reached some level of professionalism, working on a part-time basis in the program (Sistren). In other cases the program has received support from the organization (SEWA). However, production costs have never been completely covered by the group. Several questions relate to that issue, such as how to judge the appropriateness of monetary investment in equipment and production costs. Arnst (1989) questions the appropriateness of investing in video equipment and training, which, from the point of view of the donors, is not expensive (compared with film or TV), when, with the same amount of money, a village necessity could be solved.

Ford-Smith, discussing the experience of Sistren, illustrates the consequences, at internal and external level, of economic dependency. While Sistren successfully progressed in theatre, the group was increasing their dependency from international aid. Although, the group had the goal of self-sufficiency, their administrative energies were absorbed in "servicing the accounting and reporting processes of international aid agencies." The situation, in most of the cases, is of a reduced administrative staff, or the group's members assuming most of the administrative and financial reporting. After accomplishing reporting and accounting, there is little energy left to figure out alternatives to reach self-sufficiency.

Planning and organizing. Financial dependency has several implications beyond the economic one. Donor agencies provide funding based on project-designed activities that must be presented within a set of defined goals, tangible outcomes, and progressive, linear evolution. This requirement poses a dilemma

to groups because they usually do not plan or strategize on a project basis. A majority of the groups working in PC media production conceive it as an open process. It implies a different strategy of planning, in which the emphasis is on the process rather than on a final, predefined outcome. Process-oriented strategies of planning assume that unpredictability, altered rhythms, and conflict are integral components of these processes. As soon as a group must extract "a project" from a planned and open goal of energizing a process of PC, fragmentation of their activities occurs. The pitfall, in conclusion, is of losing a dynamic to gain accountability to international funding.

Project-oriented activities, according to the Association of Latin American video producers, fragment processes and establish unrealistic requirements that only satisfy external demands. Accountability to external funding and funding seeking, furthermore, demands a "re-writing" of experiences and processes to present them in a language that "sells" to donor agencies and that adjusts to their current priorities and policies. Writing of projects and reports is very time-consuming as it demands basic resources and infrastructure (typing, binding, accounting) that grassroots organizations are not very familiar with. Ford-Smith (1990) and Alfaro (1989) argue that these activities take an amazing amount of time and distract the group from more important activities such as internal accountability and evaluation.

Participation and Collectiveness

Questioning vertical structures of governments and development programs, grassroots organizations, organized groups and local NGOs enhance "collectiveness" as an essential principle of decision-making and organizing. In practice, however, this principle has affected organizational structures constraining group production, and concealing the presence of the informal power of particular individuals. Moore (1986) criticizes collectiveness as an end in itself because it "just becomes anti-dialogue, anti-participatory, anti-democratic activity."

Alfaro (1990) has noted, for example, how the general assembly, considered as the maximum organism, tends to function based on informal power and leadership that allows for little real participation. Ford-Smith (1990) further points out the time-consuming (endless meetings) and inefficient bureaucratic mechanisms that are involved in collective structures per se. Collective decision-making (and collective media production) seems to work with very small groups that have a strong sense of group membership, with limited and tightly defined aims and objectives. Beyond that, the risk is to equate notions of democracy with the notion of collective (as physical presence of "everybody") decision-making. Moore describes this as a practice of "dogmatic conformism," arguing that it can freeze participation into "horizontal positions dictated by demagogic egalitarianism just as its opposite freezes people intro vertical positions."

White (1989) and Stuart (1990) report these difficulties when implementing a program of participatory video in Poona India, and training video workshops in different parts of the Third World. Participatory processes of video production might encourage the exercise of informal power by leaders who assume control in manipulating the camera, deciding the script, evaluating, etc. In structures where the roles of leadership are not clearly defined (because of the principle of horizontalism and egalitarianism), processes of PC media production could increase informal practices and mechanisms of authoritarian power. Stuart (1990) further notices the power-feeling that a means such as video can provide to its user. Ford-Smith (1990: 25) stresses the urgency of

discussing these issues among women's organization:

> In organizations where women have granted leadership, maternalism and the dominant face of race and class power are often reflected. Leadership can result in far greater authoritarianism than leadership which is informal and accountable. The time has come to get the issue out into the open.

In the process of media production, a "dogmatic" use of the principle of collectiveness might jeopardize the full development of the technical and artistic skills and the sharing of insights and commitment in participants. Tomaselli (1989) concludes that the excessive emphasis on "subjects-participation" without strategizing their participation into a meaningful and creative one is detrimental to the interests those PC processes are meant to empower.

Distance between Participants as Producers and Audience

This problem has been extensively discussed in experiences of community media in Western countries. In PC experiences in the Third World, the issue has not been raised, but several related questions have been formulated. The concern refers to participants' involvement in media planning and production process and how becoming "producers" can distance them from their position/perception as audiences.

Becoming producers situates the community in the concerns and point of view of the "maker" and, therefore, places them in a very different perspective on the issues, causing them to lose to some extent their "native point of view." However, presence of a strong group and organization with activities in other fields seems to be a feasible alternative to avoiding the creation of differences and distances among the community. At the individual level, participatory experiences have an impact on the individuals who continue to be part of the community, but perceive themselves in a different way.

Colonizer Bias

At a general level, one of the chief risks of PC projects is their possible "colonizer bias." First, there is the definition of participation. The Western idea of participation currently dominates (participation through vote, distribution or representation). However, participation is a concept present in almost every non-Western culture; its implementation is always mediated by specific cultural forces and traditions. Participatory projects need to be aware of the variety of systems of decision-making and the local distribution of social functions.

Second, there is the risk related to introducing a specific communication technology. As any other technology, communication media are not neutral techniques. The machine itself responds to specific cultural codes, reinforces specific processes, and has specific social connotations.

One other point to consider is the use of participatory methods as a manipulative method that results in an activity of "colonization." La Belle (1987) points how the moving from top-down organizational structures to participatory ones tends to fail and lead to uses of methods as domination, improvement of subjugation, and widening of control.

There are two kinds of overuses/misuses of the word participation. One is using "participation" as a cover for a pre-defined program. The introduction of a participatory approach fulfills the function of presenting this in a more subtle

form, with a more suggestive facade and with the risk of becoming more manipulative than top-down strategies. The other is in the view that participation itself is what makes a project grassroots and needs-based and, therefore, it is a must to any development project. The problem with this perspective is the tendency to forget contextual factors and specific conditions in which participation is not always the best alternative or the desired process. Questioning of the two perspectives can be easily extrapolated from other projects in practice. Part of the problem relies on the way a "participatory approach" has been operationalized. This operationalization tends to be promoted based on the Western understanding of participation as physical presence and verbal consensus.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Although participation cannot be defined as a strict set of methodological tools or behaviours, the elements characterizing genuine PC programs with women can be identified. Acknowledgment of, for example, the various culturally mediated perceptions of the concept is necessary in designing and applying participatory programs. Accepting women's right to participate, act, and decide and understanding the specific economic and social circumstances effecting women's participation assure control of PC programs by the beneficiaries and the program's responsiveness to community interests and needs. Use of PC media requires sensitivity in understanding that communities are not homogeneous entities, but that social barriers, hierarchies, and gender differences are intrinsic community dynamics. Once these conditions are met, the potential of PC activities as intrinsic educative processes is released. Certainly, the conditions outlined here apply not only to women's programs but also, in general, to any PC program.

Participatory communication activities are valuable tools in seeking democratic and generalized access to education. As nonformal educative processes, PC activities assist disempowered populations with life skills and provide knowledge necessary to improve their life conditions, share and diffuse relevant information, and make informed decisions. An adequate balance of resources, goals, and strategies might guarantee the continuity of a PC process. However, the presence of a strong group, a genuine exercise of democracy, and adequate mechanisms of decision making create the conditions for success.

Women's communication talents and capabilities can be "discovered" and "recovered" by PC methods. PC techniques provide ways to break women's self-marginalization from the public world, reinforce women's communicative functions in the private world and within the family, community, and workplace, and integrate women's forms of communication (emotive, personal, familiar) in public communication. Alfaro (1988) precisely characterized PC experiences with women as processes of "recovery of the word"; processes that empower women and strengthen their alternatives for change. Participatory approaches are particularly useful to women in allowing them to share and receive useful information and to support learning processes.

The potential of PC strategies can be effectively used by any other social group and community, and probably by formal education strategies. Manipulation and use of media promotes powerful educative processes by stimulating sharing of information among groups and by giving access to communication resources. When media are used in a participatory way, the information conveyed can be more reliable because it results from a collective, participatory process of research and assessment. Working in a group requires the permanent validation of the information and ideas fostering social accountability (Fuglesang and Chandler 1986; Lozare 1989). Involving participants in defining content and the information to be conveyed fosters analytical skills. Furthermore, participation in media production encourages unique learning processes and skills. Participation in broadcasting, visualizing, dramatizing, and defining narrative contents are effective ways of discovering and

developing participants' creative skills, and of sharpening their perception of specific issues (for example, understanding causes of specific problems, establishing relationships among problems, and stressing the commonality of a problem with others like them).

The current impasse between theory and practice in PC programs is a consequence of the absence of evaluation and follow-up. Most of the attempts to evaluate PC programs have responded to criteria of funding agencies (for example, objectives accomplished, number of people involved) and, under these criteria, elements such as the unpredictability and complexity, inherent in participatory projects, have been either negatively assessed or disregarded. The lack of mechanisms for information-sharing and accountability to international agencies and governments of their "recipients" perpetuates a vertical and unequal relation. It maintains groups in an informative isolation that denies their chances of learning about other approaches and experiences (Ford-Smith 1990).

The beneficiaries' evaluation of the experience has also been ignored as the complexity of their community has been disregarded. From the beneficiaries point of view, we must ask, then, if "participation" is always desirable. The answer would be negative if the Western definition of participation (as bodily presence) was applied. However, the response would be positive if participation was understood as a strategy, a "moral incentive" that acts at the level of decision-making, conferring voice to the powerless, continuous strategies of negotiation, and access to more democratic conditions (Diaz 1989; Goulet 1989).

Participatory communication experiences provide ways and instruments for transforming and empowering the actors involved in development processes. As a strategy, participatory programs require that beneficiaries' views be acknowledged. Even in the worse conditions (catastrophe, urgent actions), the desires and opinions of the "victims" need to be known. The belief that target populations are ignorant about specific issues (for example, technology and science) or the assessment that, under special conditions, intervention without consultancy is required, must be carefully considered if colonialist tendencies of intervention are to be avoided. Participation of the target group does not imply reduced, small-scale programs. There is a conceptual and practical difference between participation as "small and isolated" - which does not define participation - and participation as a power or process coming from below.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Participatory communication activities must be considered valuable educative tools in facilitating access of women and their entire communities to basic knowledge, relevant information, and necessary skills for development. Support of these activities requires not only financial and human resources, but also an understanding that beneficiaries are the ones in control of the program. Further, if PC processes are to be supported by international agencies or governments, they need to understand that time-frames, project-oriented processes, and transferable models are "external" concerns that constrain and unnecessarily frame PC processes.

The excessive time and energy that external accountability takes from groups encouraging PC processes is an issue of serious concern that requires transformation in the organizational and policy structure of funding organisms. Accountability to these groups and creation of mechanisms of evaluation that suit their programs is urgently needed.

The expansion of PC training processes and of interactive uses of media requires encouragement by private institutions, governments, and development agencies. To guarantee a fair and genuine implementation of PC activities, special attention should be given to establishing adequate and sensitive training for facilitators and community leaders of PC processes. Also, the adequate mobilization of grassroots organizations and community leaders must be guaranteed; they are providers of basic human and organizative resources. Again, particular attention should be given to avoiding inequity in gender representation.

PC activities are valuable tools to collect information, to detect beneficiaries' needs and interests, and to promote participatory research processes. The use of PC strategies should be considered in implementing methods of needs appraisal and participatory research programs.

To guarantee the equity and sustainability of PC processes, further study and evaluation of participatory experiences are essential. Research needs to be complemented by new insights that reveal beneficiaries' perception of participatory communication, including beneficiaries' determinants of media reception and their viewing habits.

Questions about the contradictions of democracy, collectivity, and leadership need to be discussed among local NGOs and grassroots organizations. Blindness to the problems that are affecting PC process and the inadequate treatment of these issues perpetuates a "dogmatic conformism" and inefficient mechanisms of production and decision-making.

Self-sustained networks of groups using PC media should be promoted, as this avoids external dependency and creates conditions for exchange and replication of successful experiences. Programs oriented to PC activities should accept unpredictability and complexity as intrinsic characteristics.

APPENDIX 1
EXPERIENCES IN PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

GROUP	REGION	MEANS	FRAMEWORK	INITIATIVE	ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
SISTREN Jamaican's women theatre and cultural organization	Jamaica	Theatre Magazine	Popular education: popular theatre	Government program Independent organization	Women's cultural organization
SEWA Self-employed women's association	India Ahmedabad	Video	Development communication	SEWA International NGO (training)	Union
Association of market vendors	Perù Lima	Radio (radio soaps) Loudspeakers Video	Popular communication	Market vendors' association Local NGO (training)	Association
Women and communication project	Tanzania Namionga	Theatre Dances Workshops	Development communication	University of Tanzania	
ATC Association of rural workers	Nicaragua	Photostory	Popular education	Women's secretariat of the association	Union

CALARIZ Fishermen association	Philippines	Soundslides	Group media communication	CALARIZ Asian Social Institution (training)	Association
Radio MENCIA	Dominican Republic	Radio	Popular communication: popular radio	UCLAP Latin American Catholic Union	Women's communication group
CENDIT Centre for Development of Instructional Technology	India	Video	Development communication	CENDIT	NGO
Nurses' Union of Bogotà	Colombia, Bogotà	Video	Popular communication	Union local NGO (training)	Union
Daycare run by mothers	Colombia, Bogotà	Video	Popular communication	Daycare staff and local NGO (training)	Group
Program glass of milk	Perù, Lima	Video (Video drama)	Popular education	CALANDRIA Peruvian Association of Social Communicators	Group

Radio Bahá'í	Ecuador	Radio	Community radio	Bahá'í	
Care program	India	Video	Development communication	Local NGO	Program
Village Video Network	Worldwide (China, Egypt, Mali, Indonesia, U.S., Zimbawe, Jamaica)	Video	Development communication	International NGO	Network
Project development Support Communication	Nepal	Video (Video letters)	Development support communication	World international foundation Ministry of Panchayat	Project
Union	Canada Nova Scotia	Newsletter: Soap operas and cartoons	Popular education	Union directive members	Union
Skyriver project	Alaska	Film	Community media animation	Facilitator	Community
Fogo Island	Canada, New Foundland	Film Video	Community media	National Film Board University of New Foundland Citizens' committee	Group of production

ECORA education through community radio	Bolivia	Radio	Non-formal education	Ministry of education ECORA	NGO
Mahawelli Community Radio	Sri Lanka	Radio	Community radio	Government	
Radio Education Teachers' Training Program	Nepal	Radio	Interactive radio	Government AID Agency for International Development (training)	
Rural Communication Network	Liberia	Radio	Development communication	Ministry of Health	Campaign
Radios Mineras	Bolivia	Radio	Popular communication	Union	Union

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